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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5945
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3642
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3501
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4187
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1279
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4134

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001546

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; EEB;
ENERGY FOR EKIMOFF/BURPOE/COHEN
COMMERCE FOR DSTARKS/EHOUSE

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TAGS: [EPET](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EINV](#) [RS](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMEN AND RUSSIAN PRESIDENTS MEET OFTEN BUT NO
GAS DEAL YET

REF: A. ASHGABAT 1533
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1486

Classified By: Charge Peter Eckstrom for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov's one-day working visit to Moscow on November 29 did not finalize a new gas deal between Russia and Turkmenistan. Berdimuhamedov officially announced his trip to Moscow two days before arriving in the Russian capital to meet with President Medvedev. Following the trip, on December 1, Russian presidential aide Sergei Prikhodko announced that Medvedev would visit Turkmenistan in the latter part of December to attend the opening of a Russian school in Ashgabat. When the Russian president visited Turkmenistan in September, many thought Medvedev's planned return visit in December would be the occasion to announce a gas deal. However, the gas stalemate has dragged on since April with reports that both sides have yet to agree on the volume of gas to be delivered. As a result, many still doubt the two sides will reach a gas deal by the end of 2009 (ref A).

[1](#)2. (SBU) Turkmen press reports indicated that Berdimuhamedov flew via helicopter from Moscow to Medvedev's countryside residence in Zavidovo on November 29. According to Turkmen newspaper reports, the two leaders focused on promoting cooperation between the two countries in the commercial and economic spheres, as well as joint projects in the energy, transportation, education, and cultural sectors. They also reportedly stressed the importance of diversifying trade between the two countries, while increasing supplies of high-tech goods and processed products. The Turkmen media did not reveal any details regarding presidential discussions related to energy, however.

[1](#)3. (C) Before the last-minute trip to Moscow, Berdimuhamedov did meet with Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov on November 26 in Ashgabat, reportedly to work out the logistics of Berdimuhamedov's quick trip to Moscow which took

place three days later. Political Counselor at the Russian Embassy in Ashgabat Leonid Sklyarov told Charge that the purpose of Berdimuhamedov's last-minute, working visit to Moscow was for the two presidents to metaphorically "synchronize their watches" on a range of issues, including trade and agriculture, as well as gas purchases. He added that Medvedev would travel to Ashgabat during the last 10 days of December, but did not elaborate on any possible deliverables for the trip. Russian web-based newsites and some websites on Turkmenistan, hosted outside of the country, continue to report that Russia and Turkmenistan are still far from reaching an agreement on the gas trade issue. Turkmen government officials responsible for oil and gas have recently told us that negotiations are on-going and the quantity of gas to be purchased remains the major sticking point (ref B).

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Berdimuhamedov's last-minute trip to Moscow appeared to be focused on laying the ground work for future bilateral cooperation during Medvedev's next trip to Ashgabat in December. Despite frequent face-to-face visits between the two presidents, it appears that both sides are still at loggerheads regarding gas. During the process of hammering out an agreement on quantity and price, it seems both presidents want to be seen meeting each other. However, their current deliverables are merely references to "future cooperation in many spheres, in addition to energy," and even a concrete deliverable as unrelated to energy as the opening of the Russian school appears in play. END COMMENT.
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